

Entrant company name: **Honest Communications**

Category: **Specialist PR Consultancy of the Year**

Employees / fee income

- Six

Fee income and profit margin

- 2023: £335,000. 18%

- 2024: £325,000. 17%

- 2025 (projected): £360,000. 20%

Business objectives / analysis

Goal 1- Retain portfolio in the gardening sector:

- Income from horticultural brands
 - 2023: 95%
 - 2024: 99%
- Retention rate of 88% in 2024 and all clients moved to a 12-month contract

Goal 2- Grow portfolio in the gardening sector:

- New contracts:
 - 2023: Four new clients, all from referral. Additional annual income: £95,000
 - 2024: Five new clients—two returning clients, two were referral and one from outreach. Additional annual income: £76,850
- Existing clients
 - 2023: £62,000 additional revenue from existing clients
 - 2024: £58,000 additional revenue from existing clients, surpassing our goal of £10,000, by negotiating an average of 22.5% fee increases with four legacy clients and an average of 15% fee increases from three existing clients.
- Total turnover
 - 2023: £335,000 (budgeted £325,000)
 - 2024: £325,000 (budgeted 10% growth, 8.3% achieved)
 - Increased profit by 274% since 2019
- 11.5% increase in average day rate (now £850 per day)
- 14% increase in average retainer from £1680 in Jan 23 to £1910 in Dec 24.

Goal 3- Build lasting relationships

- With clients
 - Income from retainers, not projects
- 2023: 88%
- 2024: 96%
 - 75% of clients have been with us for over 40 months (we have been operating for 76 months)
- Average client contract of 45 months
- Longest client has been with us for 70
- Parted ways with two brands in 2024 by choice as they were misaligned with our values.

Business strategy

The vision for Honest Communications was to become the leading specialist gardening PR agency- we are proudly now the go-to agency among brands, media and influencers in the industry.

Our ethos is centred around honesty, building lasting relationships and always producing the best work. We are relentlessly results-focused, but always with a human approach, and it's this duality of head and heart that makes us special. This translates into our values:

- Go Above and Beyond
- Always Be Honest
- Grow Together
- Encourage Creativity and Innovation

Our strategy for 2024 was to invest in the business ready for the next phase of growth and further build our position as the go-to gardening PR specialist. This includes becoming GIMA members and marketing activity such as monthly guest articles in industry trade titles, testimonials from key media and clients, and producing our second Home & Garden Trends Report, which has further cemented our reputation in the industry.

CPD

Our team is a huge priority. We recently promoted employee Beth to Head of Culture, who is now responsible for maintaining culture, ensuring the team feels valued and heard, and helping individuals develop.

CPD:

- August 2024: CIPR membership for every team member
- 240 hours invested in CPD in 2024
- £500 budget for upskilling per person per year
- Upped allowance for 2025 to two upskilling days per month for every team member
- Monthly team knowledge share
- Quarterly external speakers
- Monthly CPD leaderboard shared in our internal newsletter
- Monthly check-ins and performance reviews
- Personalised professional progression plans
- Student placement scheme
- Team personality profiling

Culture and wellbeing:

- Hybrid, part-time and flexible working, including midday Friday finishes
- Annual wellbeing allowance
- Birthday day off
- A recharge day
- A right to disconnect policy
- A mental health policy
- Trained in-house mental health first aider
- Access to BACP-registered counsellors via a Mental Health Hotline
- My Healthy Advantage app
- Free eye tests
- Employee engagement survey
- Bi-monthly culture and wellbeing focus groups
- Team wellness walks
- Monthly team socials
- A reward scheme to ensure employees feel valued
- Champagne to celebrate hitting KPIs!

This contributes to our average staff retention rate of 86% and an Employee Net Promoter Score of 100% in 2024.

Recent outstanding achievements

Client list growth:

- Appointed by returning client, David Austin Roses to handle a highly prestigious collaboration at RHS Chelsea Flower Show 2025 (project value £15,600) across four months
- Appointed by garden designer Melanie Hick to promote show garden at RHS Hampton Court Festival 2024 (project value £4,800 + ongoing ad-hoc representation post-show)

- Appointed by returning client, SBM Life Science to relaunch Maxicrop (project value £11,000) across six months
- Appointed by Ark Wildlife to provide retained PR support (annual retainer £28,800) Launched:
- Senior Leadership Team
- The Honest Network– our community of gardening influencers
- New impact report for clients focusing on value, impact and ROI
- The second Honest Communications Home & Garden Trends Report Shortlisted for:
 - o PRMoment Awards Micro Agency of the Year
 - o CIPR Excellence Awards Specialist Agency of the Year
 - o East Midlands Business Leadership Awards
 - o East Midlands Business Masters Awards

Campaign summary

Launching the inaugural Henschman Topiary Awards to find the UK's best topiarist.

Brief: To deliver a high-impact, low-cost campaign reaching Henschman's target audiences

- home gardeners and professional gardeners– that made topiary trendy again while establishing Henschman's ownership and expertise in the art.

Objectives:

- Raise brand and product awareness
- Generate high-quality entries and interest in the Awards
- Maximise media opportunities with the winners
- Position Henschman as an expert in the field
- Create ownership of the Topiary Awards for years to come

Activity:

- Secured leading industry figures for judges
- Drafted/issued tailored press releases to announce the launch, segmented across trade and consumer media
- Created expert bios and pitched top tips from judges
- Created score sheets
- Arranged strategic partnerships with professional gardening bodies such as the Society of Garden Designers, community gardening groups, and members of organisations such as the RHS
- Coordinated photocall to present winners with trophies on a show garden at RHS Hampton Court Festival
- Invited key media to attend
- Created regionalised media lists / press releases for all finalists

- Pitched for interviews and features across print/digital/broadcast with finalists

Outcomes:

- Reach of 23.5 million
- 50 pieces of coverage
- Features in Financial Times, New Yorker and BBC
- Hit client's "dream coverage KPI" in BBC Gardeners' World
- Coverage in key trade publications
- Regional coverage across print, online and radio
- Exploring a commissioned TV series on the competition
- Expanding to Europe in 2025

Budget: £12,000

The text in this case study is presented as submitted in the original award entry. Where necessary, entrants have removed or redacted information considered sensitive or confidential.